

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-14 ISO-00 EPA-04 CG-00 DOTE-00 AID-05
CEQ-01 CIAE-00 SOE-02 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08
INR-07 IO-14 L-03 NSF-02 NSC-05 NSAE-00 PM-05
USIA-15 SS-15 SP-02 DOE-11 INT-05 FMC-02 DLOS-09
/137 W

-----110437 232018Z /46

P R 231800Z JAN 78
FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8238
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

UNCLAS SAO PAULO 0188

DEPT. PASS: EPA/OIA FOR OIL AND HAZARDS DIV AND EPA/EDISON;
DOT FOR NCR AND US COAST GUARD AREA CMDRS.

E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: SENV, BR
SUBJECT: MAJOR OIL SPILL - BRAZIL'S SANTA BARBARA

REF: SWO PAULO 0144

1. SUMMARY - THE MAJOR OIL SPILL AT POST OF SAO SEBASTIAO IS BEING
COMPARED TO THE SANTA BARBARA SPILL BECAUSE OF THE RELATIVE SERIOUS-
NESS
OF THE DAMAGE CAUSED, AND THE IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLLUTION
CONTROL. TOTAL EXTENT OF DAMAGE IS STILL NOT KNOWN BUT OIL HAS
ACCUMULATED ON MANY BEACHES FROM UBATUBA, STATE OF SAO PAULO TO
GUARATIBA, STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO. THERE ARE ADDITIONAL LARGE
SLICKS AT SEA WHICH WILL REACH BEACHES IN FUTURE. NO ACUTE DAMAGE
TO MARINE LIFE OR WILDLIFE HAVE BEEN REPORTED, ALTHOUGH SOME FISHING
AREAS ARE REPORTING THAT CATCHES OF FIN FISH AND SHELL FISH HAVE AN
OILY TASTE. COAST GUARD/EPA TEAM ALSO REPORTS THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENT
WHILE HAMPERED BY LACK OF EQUIPMENT AND ORGANIZATION, ARE MAKING
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GREAT EFFORTS AND RELATIVELY GOOD PROGRESS IN CONTROLLING AND
REPAIRING DAMAGE FROM SPILL. COAST GUARD/EPA TEAM ALSO REPORT SAO
PAULO STATE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO EXPAND OIL POLLUTION CONTROL
PROGRAM AND TEAM WILL BE COOPERATING WITH SAO PAULO GOVERNMENT IN
ORGANIZING SUCH PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

2. COAST GUARD/EPA TEAM MEMBERS MONSON, DEWLING, KLEVENO AND BIBLANE

BRIEFED CONGEN JAN. 20 ON OIL SPILL. EXACT CAUSE OF ACCIDENT AND AMOUNT OF OIL SPILL IS NOT KNOWN AND IS STILL UNDER INVESTIGATION BY BRAZILIAN NAVY. FIRST REPORTS INDICATED THAT TANKER "BRAZILIAN MARINA" HIT A ROCK ON JANUARY 9. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT UP TO TEN TONS OF KUWAIT CRUDE WAS SPILLED. DANGER REMAINS OF FURTHER SPILLS FROM TANKER BECAUSE REPAIRS HAVE NOT BEEN MADE AND BOTTOM STORAGE TANKS ARE FILLED WITH WATER, TOPPED BY OIL. FURTHER SPILLS FROM TANKER MAY OCCUR WHEN SALVAGE OPERATIONS BEGIN.

3. SHORTLY AFTER ACCIDENT OCCURED, A RECENTLY ORGANIZED COMMITTEE OF VARIOUS GOVERNMENT ENTITIES, INCLUDING THE S. P. STATE GOVERNMENT, NAVAL AUTHORITIES, AND PETROBRAS, WENT INTO ACTION AND EARLY MORNING OF JANUARY 10 OPERATIONS WERE TAKEN OVER BY CETESB OFFICIAL, CARLOS CELSO DO AMARAL, WHO IS STILL ACTING AS ON-THE-SCENE COORDINATOR. GOVERNMENT'S FIRST EFFORTS WERE SEVERELY HAMPERED BY LACK OF EQUIPMENT
KNOW-HOW AND ORGANIZATION WHICH PROMPTED REQUEST TO USG FOR ASSISTANCE.

4. COAST GUARD/EPA TEAM HAS BEEN ON SCENE SINCE SUNDAY, JANUARY 15. THEIR ASSESSMENT AS SO FAR IS THAT EXTENSIVE DEPOSITS HAVE ACCUMULATED ON BEACHES IN AREA FROM UBATUBA IN THE STATE OF SAO PAULO TO GUARATUBA IN RIO DE JANEIRO METROPOLITAN AREA. GREATEST ACCUMULATION OF OIL HAS OCCURED ON BEACHES AROUND UBATUBA AND IN AREA AROUND PICINGUABA ON SAO PAULO/RIO DE JANEIRO STATE LINE. MOST DAMAGE IS ON RECREATIONAL
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BEACHES, ALTHOUGH SOME FISHING VILLAGES NEAR PICINGUABA ARE ALSO AFFECTED. TEAM HAS NOT OBSERVED ACUTE DAMAGE TO ECOLOGY SUCH AS DEAD FISH OR OIL SOAKED BIRDS. HOWEVER, THEY HAVE RECEIVED SOME REPORTS OF OILY TASTE OF RECENT CATCHES OF FIN FISH AND SHELL FISH IN AREA.

5. LACK OF EQUIPMENT AND KNOW-HOW GREATLY HAMPERED GOVERNMENT'S INITIAL EFFORTS. TEAM REPORTED THAT DISPERSANTS WERE USED ON BEACHES, RATHER THAN THAT AT SEA, THUS DRIVING OIL TWELVE INCHES UNDERNEATH SAND. OIL ON THESE BEACHES CANNOT BE REMOVED EXCEPT BY EXTENSIVE EXCAVATION. TEAM SAID THAT THEIR PRIORITIES ARE NOW (1) PREVENTING FURTHER SPILLS FROM THE TANKER; (2) CLEANING UP THE BEACHES AND, (3) CONTAINING AND CLEANING UP OIL AT HIGH SEAS. WORK ON CLEANING THE RECREATIONAL BEACHES IS NOW UNDER WAY, BUT LARGE SLICKS OBSERVED OFFSHORE HAVE EMULSIFIED INTO MOUSSE AND CANNOT BE CONTROLLED. MUCH OF THIS OIL MAY EVENTUALLY COLLECT ON BEACHES.

6. TEAM ALSO REPORTS THAT WHILE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO CONTROL SPILL HAVE BEEN HAMPERED BY LACK OF EQUIPMENT AND TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW, LOCAL OFFICIALS HAVE DONE VERY WELL CONSIDERING THE

CIRCUMSTANCES. LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS NOW WELL AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING PREPARED TO RESPOND TO FUTURE SPILLS. GOVERNOR OF SAO PAULO HAS INDICATED TO CETESB (SAO PAULO STATE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL AGENCY) THAT HE WILL APPROVE AN EMERGENCY BUDGET TO EXPAND POLLUTION CONTROL PROGRAM. EXACT AMOUNT OF BUDGET IS NOT YET KNOWN; PRESENT SPILL HAS COST SAO PAULO STATE GOVERNMENT SOME TEN MILLION CRUZEIROS SO FAR. PROPOSED EMERGENCY BUDGET WILL BE USED TO PURCHASE EQUIPMENT AND TRAIN PERSONNEL. TEAM WILL ALSO PROPOSE THAT KEY BRAZILIAN PERSONNEL BE BROUGHT TO THE U. S. FOR TRAINING AT EPA AND COAST GUARD FACILITIES.

7. POST IS CONTINUING IN CONTACT WITH TEAM, PROVIDING ASSISTANCE WHEN NECESSARY AND WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP DEPARTMENT INFORMED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: OILS, OIL SPILLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SAOPA00188
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780034-0363
Format: TEL
From: SAO PAULO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780133/aaaabbwu.tel
Line Count: 136
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 31fb24e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 feb 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3730403
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MAJOR OIL SPILL - BRAZIL'S SANTA BARBARA
TAGS: SENV, BR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/31fb24e1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014